

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A postage evidencing meter comprising:
an authorization database for storing parameters for at least one user, wherein the parameters limit the at least one user's ability to evidence postage using the meter.
2. The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the parameters include a maximum postage amount that the at least one user is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage.
3. The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the parameters include a period of time during which the user is allowed to use the meter to evidence postage.
4. The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the parameters include:
a maximum postage amount that the at least one user is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage over a selected period of time.
5. The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 further comprising:
a user interface;
a printer; and
a security module.
6. The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the authorization database is stored on a removable storage device.
7. The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the authorization database is coupled to the meter via a communication link to a remote postage information system.

8. A system for controlling postage usage, comprising:
one or more postage evidencing meters having a communication module for providing a communication link between the postage evidencing meter and a postage information system,
wherein the postage evidencing meter includes a database for storing postage usage parameters for at least one user, wherein the parameters limit the at least one user's ability to evidence postage using the meter.

9. The system of claim 8 wherein the parameters include a maximum postage amount that the at least one user is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage.

10. The system of claim 8 wherein the parameters include a period of time during which the user is allowed to use the meter to evidence postage.

11. The system of claim 8 wherein the parameters include:
a maximum postage amount that the at least one user is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage during a selected period of time.

12. The system of claim 8 wherein the communication link is a wireless link.

13. The system of claim 8 wherein the communications link is a wireline link.

14. The system of claim 8 wherein the one or more postage evidencing meters further comprise:

a removable storage device for storing postage usage parameters for at least one user, wherein the parameters limit the at least one user's ability to evidence postage using the meter.

15. A system for controlling postage usage, comprising:
at least two postage evidencing meters, each meter having a processor and a communication module for providing a communication link between the at least two meters,
wherein postage usage parameters for at least one user are exchanged between meters via the communication link, and wherein the parameters control the at least one user's ability to evidence postage using the meters.

16. The system of claim 15 wherein the parameters include a maximum postage amount that the at least one user is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage.

17. The system of claim 15 wherein the parameters include a maximum amount of postage that can be evidenced by a user during a selected period of time.

18. The system of claim 15 wherein the parameters include:
a maximum postage amount that the at least one user is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage; and
a period of time during which the user is allowed to use the meter to evidence postage.

19. The system of claim 15 wherein the communication link is a wireless link.

20. The system of claim 15 wherein the communications link is a wireline link.

21. The system of claim 15 wherein said communication link is used to transfer postage values securely between the at least two meters using cryptographic techniques.

22. The system of claim 15 wherein the exchange of postage usage parameters is bi-directional.

23. A method for transferring postage value between postage evidencing devices, comprising:

receiving a request for a postage value transfer, the request identifying a destination device and an amount of postage value to be transferred;

creating a postage value token at a first postage evidencing device;

subtracting the postage value amount from registers in the first postage evidencing device;

transferring the postage value token to a second postage evidencing device;

verifying the postage value token at the second postage evidencing device; and

adding the postage value to registers at the second postage evidencing device.

24. The method for transferring postage value of claim 23 further comprising:
transferring the postage value using a communications link between the first and second
postage evidencing devices.

25. The method for transferring postage value of claim 24 wherein the
communication link is a wireless link.

26. The method for transferring postage value of claim 24 wherein the
communication link is a wireline link.

27. The method for transferring postage value of claim 23 further comprising:
transferring the postage value using a removable storage device.

28. The method for transferring postage value of claim 23 wherein the postage value
token is a cryptographically secure token.

29. A method for controlling postage usage comprising:
receiving a request to evidence postage from a selected user;
determining if sufficient postage is available within a current period of time to fulfill the
request for the selected user;
evidencing a requested postage amount; and
recording postage usage for the selected user.

30. The method of claim 29 further comprising:
receiving a request to use the postage account of a selected user; and
authenticating the selected user.

31. The method of claim 28 further comprising:
receiving a request to configure parameters for the selected user; and
modifying postage usage limits for the selected user.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein the usage limits are selected from the group consisting of:

a maximum amount of postage that can be evidenced for the user;
a time period during which the user is authorized to evidence postage; and
a class of postage that the user is authorized to evidence.

33. The method of claim 28 further comprising:

receiving a request to purchase postage for the selected user; and
adding a purchased postage value to an account for the selected user.